

# News Release

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## **The Service Reopens Public Comment Period and To Hold Public Hearing on Proposed Protection of 49 Species from Hawaiian Islands**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is reopening a 30-day comment period on a proposal to list 49 species of animals and plants from the Hawaiian Islands as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). To provide additional opportunities for public input, the Service will be holding an informational meeting and a public hearing in Hilo on Hawai'i Island.

The informational meeting and the public hearing will be held on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, at Auntie Sally Kaleohano's Luau Hale located at 799 Piilani Street, Hilo, HI 96720. The informational meeting will be held from 5 to 6 p.m. and the public hearing from 6 to 8 p.m. The informational meeting is an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the species and the listing process. The public hearing is opportunity for the public to provide either verbal or written testimony about the species and proposed listing. No questions will be taken or answered during the public hearing process. People providing testimony at the public hearing must register onsite.

The Service identified 49 species for proposed listing on September 30, 2015. These plants and animals are at risk of extinction due to invasive, non-native species, recreational activities, small population size, and threats from erosion, landslides and fire. The listing of these species will not only boost ongoing conservation efforts to address these threats and prevent extinction, but will improve the ecological health of the islands.

The 49 species occur in 11 different habitat types, with 48 of them occurring nowhere on Earth except Hawaii. Twenty-two of the plants and animals occur on the main island of Hawaii and one or more of the other islands. Nine of the plants are found only on Kauai.

One bird species proposed for listing – the band-rumped storm-petrel – occurs in Japan, Hawaii, the Galapagos and subtropical areas of the Atlantic. The Service is proposing to list only the Hawaii population, found on the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Kauai and Lehua.

The Service will not designate Critical Habitat areas for these species at this time.

"We want to hear and learn from the people of Hawaii during this public comment period and the public hearing to help ensure our analysis is based on all of the relevant information available about these

unique plants and animals,” said Mary Abrams, the Service’s field supervisor for the Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “Implementing an ecosystem-based approach to the proposed listing allows the Service to leverage conservation and recovery actions in our islands. We can’t do this without our partners and look forward to continuing this work with them, and new partners, to conserve these places that both people and species depend on.”

The comment period is open through February 24, 2016. Comments can be submitted electronically, by hard copy or provided verbally or hand-delivery at the public hearing. Comments on the proposed rule and other supporting information (including comment submittal instructions and dates) are available at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). The docket number for this rulemaking is FWS-R1-ES-2015-0125. Written comments and information can also be submitted by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2015-0125; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

Once the comment period closes, the Service will review comments received and develop a final rule. Comments previously submitted during the first comment period do not need to be resubmitted. This final rule will be published in the *Federal Register*.

For more information on these species and the proposed listing or to view the *Federal Register* notice, visit <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>.

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